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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000686

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [GV](#)
SUBJECT: RENEWED CIVIL DISTURBANCES IN CONAKRY

REF: A. CONAKRY 663
[B](#). CONAKRY 668
[C](#). CONAKRY 670
[D](#). CONAKRY 675
[E](#). CONAKRY 678
[F](#). CONAKRY 684

[1](#). (SBU) SUMMARY. Monday started off with renewed civil protests in Conakry, following four days of civil disturbances last week. There were three demonstrations this morning in areas that have been relatively quiet in recent weeks. The largest protest, which closed downtown Conakry, appeared to be led by students who were angry that their teachers did not show up for work. Security forces used tear gas to control crowds, and by noon, available reports indicated that calm had been restored throughout the city.
END SUMMARY.

[2](#). (SBU) As of 1000, there were three civil protests taking place across the capital. Embassy received reports of protest activity, including roadblocks, in the downtown area, in G'Bessia (airport district), and at Kilometer 36 (commonly viewed as Conakry city limits and the gateway to the interior). There were reports of gunfire and possibly one death. Dissatisfaction with fuel prices sparked similar civil disturbances last week, which effectively paralyzed the city for four days. The situation had returned to normal by the end of the week, but the underlying reasons for the protest remain unresolved (reftels).

[3](#). (SBU) A woman representing a local youth NGO reportedly went on the radio over the weekend and claimed that she and her organization were responsible for negotiating with the government and protestors, thereby restoring calm to the neighborhoods. According to Embassy contacts, this claim infuriated the protestors, prompting them to push for renewed protests this week in order to prove that they are under no one's control.

[4](#). (SBU) Youths organized a meeting on Sunday wherein many participants advocated against further protests. Several prominent youth leaders reportedly spent the day going through the neighborhoods encouraging youths to stay home and avoid violence. According to a youth contact, the Ministry of Security personally visited with youth leaders and gave them 4 million GnF (\$825) to distribute to the protestors as an incentive to encourage them to avoid further demonstrations. By late Sunday evening, youth contacts were relatively confident that they successfully derailed protest plans.

[5](#). (SBU) However, a protest started in G'bessia (near the airport) this morning at approximately 0600. Contacts said that the G'bessia representative had not been able to attend the Sunday youth meeting, and may not have been informed of the decision. Protestors blocked the roads with rocks and other debris, making it impossible for people to travel to

the airport. Although the access routes were blocked, the airport continued normal operations.

¶6. (SBU) Contacts from the French Embassy and the private telecommunications company Cellcom told DATT that all the roads leading to the downtown area had been blocked by protestors by 0930. They noted that local stores and businesses began closing at approximately 0945. The Cellcom representative said that he had heard gunshots near one of the company's towers, and had already closed down all business operations. The French later told DATT that most of the protestors were students who were angry that their teachers did not report to work this morning (COMMENT. The teacher's union has threatened to resume a nationwide labor strike as early as tomorrow, see reftel F. END COMMENT).

¶7. (SBU) RSO staff confirmed protest activity in the downtown area, as well as around Kilometer 36, which is the main traffic artery connecting the capital to the rest of the country.

¶8. (SBU) Security forces responded with tear gas to control crowds, and by noon, Embassy received several reports indicating that calm had been restored, and the city was quiet.

¶9. (SBU) The American school did not open today. The French School had sent everyone home by 1000.

COMMENT

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¶10. (SBU) Last week's protest activity centered on Conakry's predominantly Peuhl neighborhoods, but those areas have been relatively quiet today. The downtown protest, which seems to be the biggest one, appeared to be related to the lack of teachers rather than the fuel price issue. Coming to work this morning, Embassy staff observed that the city appeared to be going about business as usual, although there were fewer taxis out on the roads. END COMMENT.
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